

# PREGNANCY THROUGH THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

## *A guide for Fathers and Non-Birthing Partners*

It's a time of uncertainty. Globally, we are in unprecedented times and we all hold genuine concerns. Partners are often tasked with providing reassurance and stability while their pregnant loved one undergoes rapid pregnancy changes. This is a tough ask during a world crisis, especially if you have just lost your job or business.

So, how can you support your partner and also prepare yourself for parenthood? Here are some tips.



### **Take time to think about yourself as a father**

Becoming a Dad happens over time, in part by figuring out your new role. Now's a good time to think about how you were parented and how you want to parent your own child. This is individual to you and based on your values and experiences.

You might think about:

- What sort of father/parent do I hope to be?
- How do I imagine myself as a father? What strengths am I likely to bring? What struggles am I likely to have?
- What role models do I have (or have I had) in my life to 'show me the way'?
- What makes for a good (enough) father? What ingredients are needed?
- What support do I need in order to become the father I would like to be? For instance, support from others, look after physical and emotional health, learn more about normal infant development.

## Take time to think about your baby

While you are separated physically from your baby in a way your partner isn't, you can still think about who you are welcoming into the world.

You might wonder:

- Who is this little person my partner is carrying?
- Who do I think s/he'll look like?
- What sort of temperament and characteristics might s/he have or develop?
- What strengths/qualities do you hope s/he might have?

Of course, you can't be certain about who your baby is, but you can be curious about them.



## Feel connected and caring

- Track your baby's development with a weekly tracker. This helps you to follow his/her development and helps you hold him/her in mind.
- Ask your partner to tell you about the baby's movements: what does she feel, what physical sensations does she experience when baby moves, kicks, hiccups.
- Interacting with your baby when s/he kicks, moves or hiccups helps you feel connected. Singing and talking to baby in utero also helps you connect, and baby will recognise your voice after birth.

## Pregnancy is a mixed experience, global pandemic or not

Mixed feelings are part of the picture with pregnancy, and into life with a new baby too. This is the case for you as well as your partner. Even though you are not carrying the baby physically, you are invested, you are moving towards a new reality, forming a new identity; some changes will be welcome, others not. Joy and excitement can be mixed with resentment and anxiety; gains are tempered with losses; certainty and optimism can give way to self-doubt. At times we feel courageous, powerful, purposeful, mature, wise; before we oscillate to feeling just the opposite: helpless, weak, small, vulnerable, frightened. This is normal, and helps you prepare for the fluctuations and uncertainties of life with a baby. Allow those mixed feelings to stir around and co-exist. Get used to tolerating them. They are part of the experience.

### Need more support?

We have you covered. *Centre for Perinatal Psychology* is a network of 60+ perinatal psychologists around Australia. We love supporting expectant and new parents in their journey.

[www.centreforperinatalpsychology.com.au](http://www.centreforperinatalpsychology.com.au)

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